



# TOOWOOMBA BIRD OBSERVERS inc.

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**MEMBERSHIP : Adults/Families \$18 Students \$10**

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**'To encourage the observations and study of the birds of the Toowoomba area'**

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**NEWSLETTER No. 233 - June 1995**

**EDITORIAL:**

Doesn't time fly when you're having fun. I hope all TBO members ARE enjoying themselves and whittling down their avian wish list from time to time. Surprise, surprise, 1995 is the club's **20 th Anniversary!** The executive would like your expressions of interest as to how and when we should celebrate this momentous occasion. A banquet dinner at a Chinese restaurant was one suggestion.

Also the club would like thank Sharon, Alex and Olive for representing the club at the World Environment Day celebrations held at Lake Annand.

This newsletter contains the Broadwater Outing Report, a fascinating raptor restoration report by non-member, Stephen Harper of Gatton, and John Hadley's interesting finds.

**OUTING REPORT - LAKE BROADWATER, 28 May 1995.**

The eleven members and three local visitors were blessed with a perfect autumn day. The wind of the previous day had given place to a flat calm which, with warm sunshine, made ideal bird watching conditions. After meeting at the Wilga Camping Ground, we walked the track to the lake. Although bush birds were not numerous, we had perfect views of two lovely male Golden Whistlers, while much interest was shown in the markers erected by the Lake Broadwater Natural History Society (LBNHS) identifying the various trees and shrubs along the track.

The lake was very low, but still supported a great number of water fowl. Most numerous were the hundreds of Grey Teal (I am glad that it is Nicci's job to count them, not mine!). Black Duck were in lesser numbers. We saw no Hardheads, Whistlers nor Pink-eared Ducks. However, there was one lone male Musk Duck. He kept close to the edge of the mass of Polygonum (now Persicaria) which covers the whole centre of the lake. For some reason he was harassed by a pair of Marsh Harriers which

gave up patrolling the Polygonum and turned their attention on him. He responded by kicking up water in their direction. Also involved were a pair of Whistling Kites which, ignored him and concentrated their attacks on the Marsh Harriers.

The water was so shallow that in many places, far out from the edge, Black-winged Stilts could be seen wading among the swimming ducks. A flotilla of grebes cruised by. This aroused speculation as to how these little birds managed to repopulate the lake within a couple of days of its filling after the January rains, before which it had been completely dry.

After smoko in the Recreation Grounds, we drove to the headquarters of LBNHS, where we inspected their extensive library and collection of specimens. We had a good view of a mixed flock of Yellow-billed and Royal Spoonbills. They made a lovely sight as they eventually flew over, with the light shining through their translucent primaries. Also on this side of the lake were a flock of six Glossy Ibis. A lone Marsh Sandpiper had not left for the Northern Hemisphere. The inlet region is now completely dry and grassed over, so the elevated bird hide which overlooks it had lost some of its relevance, but most members were still interested to inspect it.

After lunch, those remaining did the South-west Track. At first the bush birds were again scarce, but as often happens, we started to come onto small foraging parties as the afternoon wore on. We saw Yellow-rumped and Yellow Thornbills, Speckled Warblers, an Eastern Yellow Robin, Striped, Spiny-cheeked, White-eared, Yellow-faced and Brown Honeyeaters. A male and female Red-winged Parrot displayed their plumage to good advantage in the sunlight. We had nearly got back to our vehicles with the leader's credibility under threat, before we finally saw a Red-capped Robin - and what a brilliant sight he was in the late afternoon sunshine, obligingly showing himself several times so all got a good look at him.

We saw some large mobs of Grey Kangaroos, a few Red-necked Wallabies, and on the Wilga Track, a Swamp Wallaby. In all we recorded 74 species of birds on the Park and its approaches. It was great to have Malcolm and Marjorie Wilson from LBNHSA and Anna Doneley from Dalby WPSQ to show us round. We were also grateful to LBNHA for allowing us to visit their cottage and museum.

Michael Hirst.

### HADLEY'S THRILLING TRILOGY

Here is an account from John Hadley regarding three new sightings for 1995.

**30 January 1995**

At Eungella N.P., a short drive from my lodgings at The Chalet, was Diggings Road, a heavily rainforested area. I came to a huge Burdekin Plum tree, which was in fruit and flower at the same time. A close inspection revealed numerous Scarlet Honeyeaters and then several Eungella Honeyeaters. Also present were four Superb Fruit-Doves. Two days later on Dalrymple Road, I came across a more isolated tree with eight more Eungella Honeyeaters. Feel I have possibly seen the entire population of this species !?

**26 March 1995**

Arrived at Armidale and contacted Andrew Ley. We then proceeded past Kingstown, west of Armidale, where Regent Honeyeaters were seen two weeks earlier. No luck as the Red Ironbarks had finished flowering. Advised by Andrew on 28th at my motel that Regents were seen on the Monday, thirty kilometres west of Bundarra. Next day, after a three hour search, we located them and had

excellent views. This autumn sighting is of interest as the whereabouts of the birds at this time is largely unknown.

**4 May 1995**

Whilst birding at Atkinson's Dam with Patricia Solomon, two Marsh Harriers put up an Australian Bittern which slowly and heavily flew about 100 metres to cover. Followed it along a bank protruding into the dam and luckily the bird flew again. This species is rarely seen in Queensland.

John Hadley

**SIGNED, SEALED, DELIVERED: RESCUE OF A LETTER-WINGED KITE NEAR GATTON**

(The following letter and several colour photographs were kindly provided by non-member, Stephen Harper, at my request. A friend, Lonnie Hogan, heard about it and rang me in the first place. Thanks Lonnie for the tipoff and Stephen for taking the time to write an excellent account of this highly significant finding. I hope your effort is inspirational to others. Michael Atzeni)

I have finally put to paper the events leading to the recovery of the Letter-winged Kite, about which I have recently spoken to you.

On March 2, 1995 about 10pm, my wife and I were driving westward along the Warrego highway where, at about 6 km east of the University of Queensland's Gatton campus (27° 3'S 152° 30'E), I noticed a bird on the side of the road which appeared to be, at a cursory glance, a Black-shouldered Kite. The bird was positioned about 1-1.5 m on the traffic carriageway, so I hastily returned to the site at the first opportunity fearing this bird would cease to exist given its precarious position. We pulled up on the highway where I pulled off my shirt, threw it over the bird and bundled it into the boot of the car. The grip of its talon on my finger indicated the great strength of the bird. The bird had been sleeping on the road having its head nestled back over itself and into its mantle feathers. When we arrived home our examination indicated it was a Black-shouldered Kite. The bird was clearly not well, being listless, although not showing any obvious signs of physical damage. We assumed he had been hit by a vehicle, given the situation where he was found.

The next day we allowed the bird to stay in a cage all day giving him time to recover or at least settle. Later that day I took him to Dr. Bob Donnelly in Toowoomba who gave him the all clear on any physical injury, but suggested he had an infection or illness. Bob gave him an injection of antibiotics, and a further four doses were given to us to administer over the following two days. Bob also put us in touch with an animal carer, Clare Glover, in Toowoomba who gave us excellent advice on how to care for him. That night I managed to force him to eat some dead one day old chicken, albeit a small amount. On Saturday morning we gave him his first injection an experience he was not overly fussed on. My wife affectionately called him Chooky which at first I thought to be a little demeaning to such a powerful and proud bird. He started to eat some more food the details of which are fairly gruesome. I will resist elaborating on these, suffice to say his feeding was voracious and he seemed to be able to eat an unlimited amount as you can notice by his full crop in one of the photos. In one sitting he was able to eat about 6 baby rats and in another 1 large mouse and 1 baby chick.

I have a personal interest in botanical drawing which was never extended to the avian species simply because they won't stay still for long enough to draw them. Having Chooky represented a unique opportunity to draw and intimately study this bird. At this point I started to notice some unusual features on Chooky. I will quote the description of Pizzey (1980); "Grey crown, large eyes and head, owl-like face, capped look with whitish feet". In particular, this bird had no black marking at the back of the eye and we by now suspected Chooky was not actually a Black-shouldered Kite. By Sunday Chooky was becoming much more alert and started his wing stretching exercises, our doubts about him being a

Black-shouldered Kite were confirmed; Chooky was truly a Letter-winged Kite who was grossly out of his territory.

By Wednesday, Chooky was looking very well and appeared ready to consider leaving. For two mornings I tried letting him go, however, he seemed intent on staying. I guess, all things considered, the food was good and copious quantities were available, so why go? On the Friday, I tried releasing him in the afternoon, particularly considering that the Letter-winged Kites are at least semi-nocturnal. I held him aloft on a stick and waved it up and down. He initially tried to climb down to my hand so I turned the stick around and continued waving it up and down. He finally let loose from the perch and with long looping wing beats (apparently typical of the Letter-winged Kite) took to flight, circled once around the top of us and headed off in a SSW direction hopefully to where he came from.

Chooky was very quiet, unintimidated by humans and had a very gentle nature. The intensity of their stare is certainly not indicative of their demeanour. With the exception of when we gave him his injections, at no time was Chooky in any way aggressive towards us. In my short experiences with birds this was certainly one of the most enjoyable and I am pleased to share it with you.

Stephen Harper



## MEMBERS' BIRD NOTES

All sightings as submitted by members of Toowoomba Bird Observers Incorporated. Accuracy not vouched for by TBO. Please check with observer before citing.

Wandering Whistling-Duck	08.12.94	Lake Dyer	R.H.
Musk Duck (3)*	04.12.94	Lake Broadwater	R.H.
Cotton Pygmy-goose (2)*	04.12.94	" "	R.H.
Nankeen Night Heron	30.10.94	Alderley St. T'mba	M.J.
Letter-winged Kite (1)	06.12.94	Dalby	R.H.
White-bellied Sea-Eagle	08.10.94	Helidon Dip	P.McC.
Little Eagle	18.08.94	Glenvale, Toowoomba	N.T.
Peregrine Falcon	01.10.94	Mt. Whitestone	P.McC.
Painted Button-quail	23.10.94	Waller's Rd. Helidon	P.McC.
Wood Sandpiper (4)	04.12.94	Lake Broadwater	R.H.
Pectoral Sandpiper (1)	29.10.94	Atkinson Dam	R.H.
Painted Snipe (9)*	04.12.94	Lake Broadwater	R.H.
Diamond Dove (2)	21.08.94	Helidon Dip	L. & M.A.
Glossy Black-Cockatoo (21)**	27.11.94	Goomburra	P.McC.
" " " (3)	10.12.94	Redwood Park T'mba	P.McC.
" " "	16.12.94	Goomburra	R.H.
Rainbow Lorikeet ***	Nov/Dec'94	Charleville	C.D.
Crimson Rosella	20.08.94	Black Gully	N.T.
Budgerigar (5)	06.12.94	Dalby	R.H.
Little Bronze-Cuckoo	08.11.94	Iredale Rd. Withcott	D.McC. & A.S.
Powerful Owl (adult & juv)	08.11.94	Redwood Park T'mba	P.McC. & K.McK.
" " (adult)	10.12.94	" " "	P.McC.
" " (adult & juv)	14.12.94	" " "	R.H.
Barking Owl (adult & juv)	27.11.94	Goomburra	P.McC.
Sooty Owl	17.12.94	Ravensbourne	R.H. & P.McC.
White-throated Nightjar	26.11.94	USQ. Toowoomba	M.J.
Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater	24.08.94	Tor St. Toowoomba	N.T.
" " "	27.09.94	Alderley St. Toowoomba	A.S.
Dusky Honeyeater	31.12.94	Central Stn., Frazer I	R.H.
Satin Flycatcher	14.10.94	USQ. Toowoomba	P.McC.
" " "	20.11.94	Ravensbourne	R.H.
Spotted Bowerbird (female)	17.12.94	Tent Hill area	R.H.
White-backed Swallow	30.10.94	Alderley St. Toowoomba	M.J.

L. & M.A., L. & M. Atzeni; C.D., C. Dollery; R.H., R. Hobson; M.J., M. Jacobs; P.McC., P. McConnell; D.McC., D. McCowan; K.McK., K. McKeown; A.S., A. Shore; N.T., N. Thompson.

\* Rare vagrant to this area/ westerly sighting.

\*\* A large flock for this species. Included nine males, four females and three immatures, remainder unsexed.

\*\*\* A very westerly record for this species.

Pat McConnell. Acting Records Officer.

\*\*\*\* COMING EVENTS \*\*\*\*

June Outing

Location: Deongwar State Forest.  
Date: 25 June  
Leader: Judy Theiss  
Time: 7:30 a.m.

Judy is a teacher at the Amaroo Environmental School and knows the Deongwar area very well. Meet at the Esk turnoff at Hampton in the picnic area at 7:00. BYO everything.

Mid-July Outing:

Location: Flagstone/Stockyard Creeks  
Date: 16 July  
Leader: Ann Shore 303 207  
Time: 7:30 a.m.

Meet at the foot of the hill at the junction of Flagstone and Upper Flagstone Creek Roads. BYO everything.

July Outing:

Location: Atkinson's Dam  
Date: 30 July  
Leader: John Hadley  
Time: 7:30 a.m.

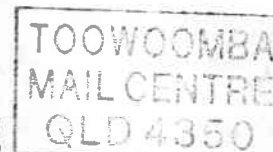
The dam is only at 3% capacity and swarming with waterbirds. Meet at the picnic area. BYO everything.

Mid-August Outing:

Location: Ballard District  
Date: 13 August

More in the next newsletter.

If undeliverable return to  
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